DRAFT: DWeb Principles

This is the first public draft of these principles. This text was initially formulated by Mai Ishikawa Sutton and John Conor Ryan, beginning March 2020. They subsequently began a process of gathering feedback on this text and stewarding discussions about what values are shared among those in the Decentralized Web community.

This is a VIEW-ONLY document — please submit your questions and feedback at this form.

PURPOSE

We aim here to both set out the principles of a decentralized web — empowering humans and carrying the values of transparency, respect and ethics — and the code of conduct and basis of mutual accountability for the new web's participants.

PRINCIPLES

1. Human Rights

I. The objective of building a distributed web is to empower people, protecting their human rights, especially those that experience systemic inequity and prejudice.

II. In the digital sphere, the rights of free expression, privacy, and knowledge are paramount to empowerment and human dignity. For that reason, enabling people to have agency over their own data and relationships is important.

III. Reducing harm is also important, and we explicitly condemn the use of distributed tools for harmful purposes such as human trafficking; sexual, mental, or physical abuse; arms trading, and other activities antithetical to human rights

2. Distributed benefits

I. We believe in the distribution of the rewards and recognition of success, monetary or otherwise, among those who contributed to that success. If that is infeasible commensurate benefit should flow to the community at large.

3. Technology-agnostic

I. We believe that multiple technical means can be used to achieve ethical and people-centric outcomes. We encourage interoperability and discourage walled gardens, however this is not a forum for promoting or preferring technical approaches.

II. We encourage people and organizations to develop, modify, and use tools to suit specific needs and conditions.

III. Technologies and tools should:

A. Be built in such a way that resists lock-in and centralization of control

B. Be built with modularity in mind—interacting as peers with other tools

C. Facilitate peer-to-peer relationships rather than relying on and fostering imbalances of power and information
D. Encourage self-governance among producers, users, and user communities, rather than relying on external economic or political interests to manage resources and dictate priorities

4. Inclusive

I. We support the spirit of invention and participation from anywhere, by anyone, without permission from government agencies or from dominant corporations.
II. We coexist — thriving alone or alongside other projects. We embrace a diversity of philosophies, approaches, and technologies to implement the distributed web.
III. We aspire to be of and to look like the world: to include and work with and to interoperate and cooperate with people like us and people different from us, those who publicly join us and those who don't.

5. Respectful

I. We treat each other with humility and self-awareness, our arguments build on facts and logic. When we make mistakes, we will be conscientious in acknowledging them; when others make mistakes, we will be polite when identifying them.
II. We support and encourage clear Codes of Conduct to ensure contributors and users abide by a standard guideline of respectful behavior.

6. Transparent

I. Transparency enables mutual trust and respect. We urge open and transparent practices, motivations, and governance to the extent possible. To that end, we urge use of open source code, considering data as a commons, and the development of new, transparent practices.

7. Value for the Environment

I. We must consider the destructive impacts technologies can have on the natural world. Best practices should aim for low ecological impact, lower energy consumption, and enhanced device lifetimes.

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